

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OTTAWA 02856 01 OF 02 062248Z
ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-12 ISO-00 ACDA-12 CIAE-00 INR-10
IO-14 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-08 NRC-07 SOE-02
DODE-00 DOE-15 SS-15 SP-02 CEQ-01 PA-02 ICA-20
/148 W

-----088692 062345Z /66

R 062236Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7632
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 OTTAWA 02856

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: TECH, ENRG, PARM, CA
SUBJECT: NEW CANADIAN PROGRAM ON NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGE-
MENT

DEPT FOR OES/NET
DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS NRC FOR LAFLEUR, DOE FOR SIEVERING

1. SUMMARY: AN ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE SIMULTANEOUSLY
AT TORONTO AND OTTAWA THAT THE FEDERAL AND ONTARIO
GOVERNMENTS HAVE AGREED TO LAUNCH THE FIRST PHASE OF
A 25-YEAR NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
THAT SHOULD LEAD TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF A DEEP UNDER-
GROUND INTRUSIVE IGNEOUS ROCK STORAGE FACILITY CAPABLE
OF SAFELY HOLDING ALL OF THE ACCUMULATED SPENT NUCLEAR
FUEL TO THE TURN OF THE CENTURY. END SUMMARY.

2. DISCUSSIONS HAVE BEEN GOING ON FOR SOME TIME
WITHIN CANADA AS TO WHETHER THE PROVINCES OR THE FEDERAL
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PAGE 02 OTTAWA 02856 01 OF 02 062248Z

GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE RESPONSIBILITY TO SUPPORT RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT ON THE LONG TERM MANAGEMENT OF NUCLEAR
WASTES. ONTARIO, WHICH HAS ESSENTIALLY ALL OF THE
NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS IN CANADA, HAS BEEN A MAJOR
PARTICIPANT IN THESE DISCUSSIONS. ONTARIO HYDRO, THE
PROVINCIAL UTILITY, HAS PROVIDED THE TECHNICAL SUPPORT
TO THE PROVINCE.

3. AN AGREEMENT NOW HAS BEEN REACHED BETWEEN THE PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS TO PROCEED WITH A JOINT PROGRAM. THE FIRST PHASE OF THE PROGRAM WILL INVOLVE GEOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION OF SOME 1500 POSSIBLE STORAGE SITES IN ONTARIO. SIX TO TEN OF THESE SITES WILL BE DRILLED TO DEPTHS OF UP TO 1,000 METERS, DURING 1979 AND 1980, TO GATHER SPECIFIC DATA ON SUITABILITY.

4. SUBSEQUENT PHASES WILL INVOLVE ACTUAL SITE SELECTION, ACQUISITION, AND DEMONSTRATION OF WASTE STORAGE. IT IS PLANNED THAT A MUTUALLY-ACCEPTABLE SITE WILL BE SELECTED AND ACQUIRED BY 1983 AND THAT DEMONSTRATION OF WASTE IMMOBILIZATION AND STORAGE WILL START IN 1985 AND CONTINUE TO THE YEAR 2000.

5. THE ATOMIC ENERGY OF CANADA LIMITED (AECL) HAS BEEN CONDUCTING EXPERIMENTS IN HANDLING SPENT FUEL AND RADIOACTIVE WASTES FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, INCLUDING WORK ON METHODS OF WASTE IMMOBILIZATION AND ON WET AND DRY STORAGE OF SPENT FUEL ELEMENTS AT ITS TWO FEDERAL RESEARCH ESTABLISHMENTS.

6. UNDER THE NEW PROGRAM AECL WILL HAVE CONTINUING RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ON IMMOBILI-
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PAGE 03 OTTAWA 02856 01 OF 02 062248Z

ZATION AND DISPOSAL TECHNIQUES, AND ONTARIO HYDRO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR STUDIES ON INTERIM STORAGE AND TRANSPORTATION OF SPENT FUEL FROM ITS REACTORS.

7. FOR THE NEAR TERM, THE STUDIES PROBABLY WILL INVOLVE FURTHER INVESTIGATION OF ABOVE-GROUND STORAGE OF DRY FUEL ASSEMBLIES IN CONCRETE SILOS (WHICH IS NOW BEING TESTED AT AECL'S WHITESHELL ESTABLISHMENT IN MANITOBA). THE LONGER RANGE APPROACH WILL INVOLVE METHODS OF "GLASSIFYING" FUEL ELEMENTS AND ENCAPSULATING THEM IN DEEP UNDERGROUND STORAGE CONTAINERS, WHICH WOULD ALLOW LATER RETRIEVAL.

8. THE INVESTIGATION OF THESE TECHNIQUES DOES NOT INVOLVE ANY DECISION AS TO WHETHER OR NOT THE SPENT FUEL WILL EVER BE RETRIEVED AND REPROCESSED. NO DECISION WILL BE MADE ON REPROCESSING UNTIL AFTER COMPLETION OF THE INTERNATIONAL FUEL CYCLE EVALUATION (INFCE) REVIEW.

9. COMMENT: THE DECISION TO PROCEED WITH A JOINT FEDERAL/PROVINCE PROGRAM ON WASTE MANAGEMENT IS OF

CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE, AS POSITIVE STEPS CAN NOW BE TAKEN TOWARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF ULTIMATE SPENT FUEL STORAGE TECHNIQUES AND TOWARD THE SELECTION OF SPECIFIC STORAGE SITES. THESE STEPS WILL INVOLVE A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS FOR PROGRAM DECISIONS AND ALSO WILL BE CARRIED OUT IN SUCH A WAY THAT COMMUNITIES WHICH MAY BE AFFECTED WILL BE KEPT INFORMED AND CONSULTED, BEFORE FINAL DECISIONS ARE MADE ON DISPOSAL SITE LOCATIONS.

10. THE PROPOSED AGREEMENT WAS TABLED IN PARLIAMENT

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UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 OTTAWA 02856

ON JUNE 5, 1978 AND THE FOLLOWING DAY WAS DISCUSSED BY THE HOUSE. THERE WAS STRONG CRITICISM BY CERTAIN MEMBERS THAT THE ACTION TAKEN BY MINISTER FOR ENERGY, MINES, AND RESOURCES IN TABLING THE AGREEMENT "BY-PASSED" THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL RESOURCES AND PUBLIC WORKS WHICH HAS BEEN HOLDING HEARINGS ON THE MANAGEMENT OF CANADA'S NUCLEAR WASTES FOR SOME MONTHS AND HAS NOT YET COMPLETED ITS DELIBERATIONS. THUS APPROVAL FOR FUNDING THE PROGRAM IS STILL IN SOME DOUBT.
DUEMLING

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